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President Davila:

Hello! I'm Robert Davila, president of Gallaudet University. Welcome to *Bob's Vlog*. My guests this week are two students –Travis Dougherty, a senior from Florida and Tennessee majoring in communication studies, and Taiyabah Naeem, a transfer student from Canada and a double major in biology and chemistry, with a minor in psychology. Travis has been accepted to be an intern on *The Late Show with David Letterman* in New York City beginning in January and continuing through the spring semester. Taiyabah spent last summer as an intern at the Human Genetics Department of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Congratulations to these outstanding students! Today we will learn more about these two great students and about their internships. Welcome to the show. Please meet our audience.

I have some questions and I'll start with Travis. Travis, tell us about how you got that internship on *The Late Show with David Letterman*?

Travis Dougherty:

Really, to make a long story short, first, I had wonderful friends at the Career Center. They came to me with the information and told me that when they received it, they thought immediately of me. I looked over the announcement that they handed me about an internship opportunity working there. I was interested, but there was a deadline of just two weeks remaining. I was a bit apprehensive and didn't feel confident, but my friends told me to go for it. As time drew very close, one friend came to me and said, "You haven't filled it out yet? Do it! You never know. It's worth a try." I completed the application, with help from a friend, and sent it off. A few days later, I got a reply which congratulated me and told me to come in for an interview. I couldn't believe I got an interview! I was one of 20 finalists, out of what must have been hundreds of applications. From that group, 10 would be chosen to work. So, 20 people went for an interview in NYC. So, I went to New York for the interview. The interview was three-and-a-half hours long, and I had an interpreter. Once the interview was over, it was just three hours later that I received an email congratulating me on getting the job. What a shock! I would become the first deaf intern there. Wow!

President Davila:

That's wonderful. You were successful. Tell us... what exactly will you do during your internship?

Travis Dougherty:

There are a number of different departments. I was chosen to work in the research department. The research department looks into information about the guests. I have two examples of what I'll be doing. Sometimes the department needs to get some specific information about a specific area that's not readily available – like a newspaper. *The New York Times*, for example, is available everywhere. But there are other newspapers that few people ever heard of and can't be found easily. So, my job would be to go to the store and get them. Another example is that I'll get the schedule of the guests coming up in the next week, and it would be my job to research when was the last time they appeared on the show and, then, anything that they have done since that time. I research and list that information and show it to David Letterman. He can then ask questions to his guests about what has been happening with them. It's an interesting job.

President Davila:

Wow, I'm impressed with that. Now, let's turn to Taiyabah. I have a question for you. You know all about research, at least the kind that happens in the science lab. Can you tell us more about what you did and what you discovered during your internship?

Taiyabah Naeem:

I started my internship at the University of Pennsylvania in the Human Genetics Department. I started in June with the support of the Biology

Department and the Career Center. Really, I was involved with research with a very unique focus. We had a child that came to the hospital and was identified as having a rare genetic disorder. It is so rare that only about 100 people in the world have it. The name of the genetic disorder is called Peter's Plus Syndrome, or PPS. The symptoms include clouding of the eyes, short stature, developmental delay, poor feeding control, poor head control, and the consequences are really devastating. I was involved in analyzing the patient's DNA and we confirmed that the child did have PPS. What was really interesting is that the parents had the mutation and they passed it on to the child. The reason that was interesting is because it is so rare. What are the chances of parents meeting, getting married, and having a child with this disorder – one child – although they had two. What was really exciting was that I was one of the first students in the lab who discovered why the patient had a problem by analyzing their DNA. Plus, I found the smallest deletion ever reported in the world. That's really exciting because our work will soon be published.

President Davila:

That's really fascinating work. Tell us, where does that syndrome, PPS, come from?

Taiyabah Naeem:

It was first discovered in 1906. It was first called Peter's Anomaly, and that was just associated with clouding of the eyes. But then they realized that many people with Peter's Anomaly had additional

symptoms too, and that's where the term comes from, Peter's Plus Syndrome.

President Davila:

You selected science as a field of study. How did you make that selection?

Taiyabah Naeem:

Growing up, I was always curious about the world around me. My father was an engineer, and he always had a mathematical explanation for everything. I always wanted to know the answers and I always wanted proof. I think that was tied to my academic work. I was also very fortunate to have had wonderful teachers, both in high school and here at Gallaudet University, and they've supported me all the way through. Really, I was just curious about everything and wanted to know the answers.

President Davila:

That's really interesting. I'm wondering if you would encourage other students to also think about majoring in science?

Taiyabah Naeem:

Sure. It's interesting that many students are scared of science. Any time they see the word "science," they back off, but really science is a lot of fun. It's not that bad. Yes, it does involve commitment and hard work, but I'm sure they would learn a lot from that major. It's

important to understand that science is not only applicable to biology and chemistry, but it has broad applications to other majors too, like psychology or social work. It helps you to understand the process of the brain and how that impacts human behavior. I think that's an important thing to let students know.

President Davila:

That's a fascinating field of study. Travis, I know that in addition to your internship coming up, you already have a lot of knowledge of and experience in the television studio because of your work with *Bison TV*. Can you tell our audience a little bit about what *Bison TV* is?

Travis Dougherty:

Sure. Bison TV is a unit fee student organization. There are several others, such as *Tower Clock*, *Buff and Blue*, *Student Body Government*, and now *Bison TV* has been added. It is a student television organization where we produce different shows, like entertainment shows, reality shows, news, and many others. We want to include more media within the deaf community. The students are working hard to produce some great things, recognizing that this is a media world – like me, for example, and my internship. Now what has happened this semester is that the whole world can watch *Bison TV*. The TV Department gives us great support and has given us the opportunity to live-stream *Bison TV* online, where anyone can see exactly what is shown on campus. So, people out there can be a part

of the deaf community. That's really nice and a great thing for the *Bison TV* organization.

President Davila:

What has been the community's or audience's reaction to *Bison TV*?

Travis Dougherty:

It has been great, and also a little bit overwhelming to receive so many requests, such as to include student films. I am more than happy to include student films. Alumni have also responded. It's been tremendous.

President Davila:

Thanks to both of you. You are having wonderful opportunities through internships to pursue your life goals. But, I have another question for both of you. First, Taiyabah, how did you manage to communicate during your internship? And, Travis, what kind of assistance will be provided to you? Tell us about communication access.

Taiyabah Naeem:

Well, I have to admit, before I started my internship I was nervous about communication, but with the support of the Chemistry Department – and also from my own personal experience – I always try to find a way to do it, so I found a way to communicate. I was very fortunate that the members of the team I was working with were

willing to learn several simple signs, such as the sign for DNA or the sign for “product.” That was really helpful. Also, I was able to communicate fine in a one-to-one situation. I can read lips. I was provided with an interpreter for large group meetings. I used the FM system. Sometimes that helped a little bit. But smaller groups were a little bit harder so, after a meeting was finished, my supervisor would meet with me one-on-one and summarize all of the discussion to make sure I really understood. So, communication wasn’t a problem because we could always find a way through it.

President Davila:

That’s a wonderful experience. And you, Travis?

Travis Dougherty:

My situation will be similar to the comments that she just made. Additionally if I find, as a new intern, that I become frustrated or communication is not clear, I will call on the Career Center to help resolve that issue with full interpreter support services. That would be a great support to me during my internship.

President Davila:

That’s wonderful. Another question for both of you: What are your future plans? Let’s start with you.

Travis Dougherty:

My future is bright. I want to go for my MFA in film production in Hollywood at Universal Studios. They have a two-year program there. Then I want to establish a television company, International Deaf Television, to be shown online. I'm working on that, setting up a team, and hope to achieve that goal in the future.

President Davila:

And you?

Taiyabah Naeem:

I plan to apply to medical school and graduate school, too. I want to get an MD and a Ph.D., as well. I'm hoping to practice family medicine, specifically for deaf families, because I know that communication can be a real barrier sometimes. And the Ph.D. is because I enjoy teaching students. Someday, maybe, I will teach on the Gallaudet campus. Who knows!

Travis Dougherty:

Me, too.

President Davila:

I am sure that with your ambition and determination, you will both succeed at your internships and with your career goals, also. It's just wonderful that you students get involved in this kind of experience while still students. You can carry that experience on to real jobs later

and other experiences beyond college. Really, this helps them with future planning. It really helps to prepare them for future challenges later in life. I want to thank both of you, Travis and Taiyabah, for joining us today. They are really outstanding students. They really learn well and hold bright, promising futures.

If other students want to learn more about these internship opportunities, please see a career counselor at the Career Center on the second floor of JSAC. Thank you, audience, for joining us and watching this program this morning. I will see you again for the next *Bob's Vlog*. So long!